MEMORANDUM

Feb 67

OFFICIAL FILE COPY

TO: Mr. Howard P. Willens

FROM: Mr. W. David Slawson

Feb 1964

SUBJECT: Letter to the Russian Government

Background

Lee Oswald spent almost three years in Russia. Almost our sole sources of information on these years are his own writings and correspondence and Marina's testimony. We are therefore preparing a letter to be sent to the Russian Government asking for additional information.

On 21 January 1964 the CIA sent us a draft of such a letter. The State Department has commented that in its opinion the CIA draft would probably have serious adverse diplomatic effects. The State Department feels that the CIA draft carries an inference that we suspect that Oswald might have been an agent for the Soviet Government and that we are asking the Russian Government to document our suspicions. The State Department feels that the Russians will not answer a letter of this kind, at least not truthfully, and that it will also do positive harm in that they will take offense at our sending it to them. The State Department proposes instead that we send a very short and simple request for whatever information the Russian

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Government cares to furnish us on Lee Harvey Oswald and his wife, Marina.

On 31 January 1964 Mr. Allen Dulles dropped into my office to converse generally on the foreign aspects of the assassination. At that time he made two points. First, he felt that we should not release Marina's testimony to the general public or even to her attorney until after we had received our answers from the Russian Government. He feels that so long as the Russians are in doubt as to how much Marina disclosed, they may be under some pressure to give us accurate and more-or-less complete information. Second, Mr. Dulles felt that we should not try to trap the Russians into giving us inaccurate or incomplete information and that we should especially avoid giving the Russians the appearance of our trying to do this. Mr. Dulles suggested that wherever we have information against which we can check the Russian answers that we indicate this fact to the Russians in our questions to them. Mr. Dulles did not mean that we indicate to the Russians <u>what</u> our information was, but only that we indicate that we <u>have</u> it. During his conversation with me, Mr. Dulles said that he would send his draft of the CIA's proposed letter to the Russian Government back to me as soon as possible with his comments noted on the margin. So far I have not received this from Mr. Dulles.

Recommendations

My inclination at the present time is that the State Department's recommended approach is probably preferable to the CIA's. However, I would modify the State Department approach slightly by following the general request with a few — very few — specific questions. These questions would be restricted to areas that were both important to us and not such as to give material offense to the Russians. I think that including a few specific questions might even be beneficial in that, if we were careful in the choice of and drafting of these questions, we might successfully convey to the Russian Government the impression that at the present time at least we were inclined to regard Oswald as neurotically and personally motivated in killing the President rather than being motivated by anything connected with the Russian Government. In other words, properly chosen and drafted specific questions might serve to allay suspicion rather than arouse it.

With the foregoing general criteria in mind, I would propose including specific questions such as the following:

We would like to have:

1. Copies of all documents and records in connection with any hospitalizations and other medical examinations and treatments of Lee Harvey Oswald and of Mrs. Marina Oswald during her adult life, including:

(1) His treatment in October 1959 in Moscow

when, according to his own diary, he was found unconscious in his hotel room by Intourist Guide Rima Shirokova after an attempted suicide.

(2) Any examinations or treatments made of Marina Oswald on or about October 1961 when, according to Lee Harvey Oswald's diary, Marina Oswald was treated for nervous exhaustion.

2. The results of any physical examinations, psychological tests or psychological examinations made at any time on Lee Harvey Oswald or Marina Oswald.

3. Copies of all communications to and from Lee Harvey Oswald with any organ or commission of the Russian Government in relation to his entering Russia and seeking permission to reside there and in relation to his seeking Russian citizenship during late 1959 and thereafter.

4. Copies of all correspondence to and from Lee Harvey Oswald with any Organ or commission of the Russian Government in reference to Oswald's efforts to leave Russia and return to the United States.

5. Copies of all correspondence to and from Marina Oswald in reference to her attempts to leave Russia and accompany her husband to the United States.

6. Copies of the file on Lee Harvey Oswald kept by the Soviet Consulate in Mexico City.

7. Copies of any records showing drunkenness, violence, disorderly conduct or other abnormal behavior on the part of Oswald, whether or not criminal.

You will note that I have not asked in the foregoing questions (except for No. 6 and No. 7) for copies of internal memoranda minutes, etc., as does the CIA draft.

The following questions might be asked, but I am inclined to think that they are not important enough to warrant probably offending the Soviet Government by including them:

1. In the file furnished to the United States Government by the Soviet Government covering the correspondence between the Russian Embassy in Washington, D. C., and Lee Harvey and Marina Oswald, there is a letter dated July 9, 1962 from N. Reznichenko, Chief of the Consular Section, to Marina Oswald and a letter dated August 15, 1962 to N. Reznichenko from Marina Oswald. Both letters refer to a "Form Card No. 118," and the letter dated August 15, 1962 states that the Form Card has been filed out and is inclosed. If possible, we request that a copy of this Form Card be furnished to us at this time.

2. A description of Oswald's job in the Minsk Radio and Television factory, plus copies of all employment records, union records and other job-related activities of Lee Harvey Oswald.

3. A statement as to why Lee Harvey Oswald was not granted Russian citizenship status by the Russian Government.

Or, if Oswald was offered such citizenship and he refused, copies of all correspondence to and from Oswald on this subject.

The CIA draft includes certain inquiries on Oswald's ownership of weapons in the Soviet Union. The CIA draft does not go on to ask about his membership in the Minsk gun club, which would seem logically to follow in this context. David Belin has told me that he no longer regards the issue of Oswald's marksmanship as of primary importance and that therefore, although he would welcome whatever additional evidence we might obtain from the Russian Government as to Oswald's skill with firearms, he does not feel that this is a high-priority item. In my own opinion, the only other reason we might want to ask questions in regard to Oswald's firearms and/or hunting activities in the Soviet Union is to find out whether the gun club and these activities were some sort of cover-up for sabotage or espionage training. Certainly, if such was the case, the Russians will not admit it nor will they furnish us any evidence from which we can document such a conclusion on our part. Consequently, because trying to get information as to a "cover-up" is hopeless and because the marksmanship angle is not crucial, I recommend that we not question the Russian Government on the subject of Oswald's firearms and/or hunting activities in Russia.